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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EFIN](#) [GCC](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: GCC SUMMIT OPENS IN DOHA WITH LOW PUBLIC  
EXPECTATIONS...AND ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE IRANIAN  
PRESIDENT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael A. Ratney,  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit opened December 3 in Doha with all six heads of state, plus Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad in attendance. Though not on the written agenda, Ahmedinejad delivered a largely non-inflammatory speech that included a twelve-point proposal to advance cooperation between Iran and the countries of the GCC. He spoke sitting at a rostrum just to one side of the six heads of state.

¶2. (SBU) Beginning by expressing his hope that God will hasten the appearance of the missing Iman, Ahmedinejad spoke of the need for peace based on justice without foreign intervention, said Iran and the countries of the GCC have common friends as well as common enemies, and emphasized that they are all united by their faith and brotherhood. His specific proposals included the following:

- Lift the visa requirement to allow free movement by Iranian citizens and allow Iranians to own property in GCC countries;
- Seek opportunities for joint investments, including the petroleum sector;
- Establish free trade zones;
- Iran is prepared to provide water and gas to GCC countries;
- Establish a "north-south corridor and facilitate commercial links by rail and road;
- Develop tourism in the region;
- Develop stronger relations between Islamic countries and poorer countries, including through establishment of a joint fund for development. (In this way, he said, we would not see injustices such as those inflicted on the Palestinian people.);
- Increase cooperation on security to ensure that the region is free of tension and of intervention by foreign powers;
- Expand educational and scientific exchanges and cooperation;
- Cooperate to safeguard the environment "in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman."

(Note: the numbering of his proposals was muddled, perhaps by the interpreter, leaving it unclear where one point ended and the next one began. This may clarify if a written version of Ahmedinejad's remarks is issued. End note.)

13. (SBU) Ahmedinejad closed with a call to make the Persian Gulf a "gulf of peace," expressed his hope that this GCC Summit is a starting point to open a new page of cooperation, and issued a call to hold a joint meeting in Tehran to discuss all aspects of Iran-GCC cooperation.

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ALL EYES ON AHMEDINEJAD  
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14. (C) The head of the GCC Department at MFA, Youssef Al-Jaber, told us December 2 that the invitation for the Iranian president to attend as an observer (an invitation also extended to the presidents of Egypt, Yemen and Turkey, as well as the heads of the Arab League, Islamic Conference, United Nations and European Union) was issued by Qatar following consultations with the GCC Council. A former member of the GCC Consultative Committee, Qatar University Professor Abdulaziz Kamal added December 3 that the Iranian President was invited with the official aim of lessening tensions in the Gulf. Unofficially, said Kamal, the invitation may have been extended to provide Iran an opportunity to affirm that its nuclear program is purely for peaceful purposes. In Kamal's view, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad would use the opportunity to encourage the GCC states to join Iran in establishing a regional nuclear consortium.

15. (C) The Turkish ambassador told Charge that the Turkish prime minister, one of several regional leaders invited as special guests, was told that no special guest would have a speaking role. In the event, Ahmedinejad was the only special invitee to accept the invitation and the only participant at the opening ceremony besides the Amir of Qatar

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with a speaking role.

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GCC PUBLICS YEARN FOR CHANGES IN DAILY LIFE  
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16. (C) Based on his discussions with GCC officials, Kamal predicted that the summit, outside of the Iranian issue, would focus on economic, cultural, and educational matters. Asked if creation of a common GCC currency or a change in the dollar peg for existing GCC currencies was on the agenda, he reported that the GCC Foreign Ministers did not include this topic. Kamal noted, however, that currency issues could nonetheless come up during the discussions among the heads of state. In Kamal's view, the citizenry of GCC states had lost trust in GCC summits as a mechanism to improve their daily lives.

17. (SBU) A sampling by Al-Jazeera and Qatar national television of public opinion in GCC states on the eve of this 28th GCC Summit depicted largely disillusioned publics. Of the persons interviewed on the street, in what was not a scientific survey, the majority expected little from this summit. Most were pessimistic if not unenthusiastic, complaining that whatever decisions the heads of states took would likely not be implemented. Few of the individuals interviewed expressed the concerns of the elites over the Iranian nuclear program and whether Yemen would be extended an invitation to join the GCC. Rather, they voiced the view that this summit should focus on the (largely economic) concerns of ordinary people:

- Allowing GCC nationals to travel to other member countries without passports;
- Establishment of a single GCC market for goods and services
- Creation of a single currency
- Further economic integration of the GCC states
- Implementation of previous GCC decisions

¶8. (C) Comment: The attendance of Saudi King Abdullah, with whom Qatar's Amir has long had strained relations, was a diplomatic success for the host. The key question now is what mileage Ahmedinejad gets out of his trip to Doha. Given a sufficient platform to bolster his legitimacy as the first Iranian leader to attend a GCC summit, any admonishment given to him by heads of state in private will be as lost on GCC publics as the unfulfilled promises of summits past.  
RATNEY